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LANGUAGES, THE TOOLS OF THE HISTORIAN

By C. E. VAN SICKLE Ohio Wesleyan University

I T IS impossible to deny that at present the study of languages both ancient and modern is under heavy attack, and the friends of language studies appear to be fighting a losing battle. For the past generation a numerous and exceedingly vocal school of educators has been subjecting the whole field to a barrage of hostile and not always fair criticism, with the apparent intention of banishing it completely from both public school and college curricula. A favorite target of these assailants has been the foreign language re-quirement which graduate schools have attached to candidacy for the degree of doctor of philosophy. They condemn it as a waste of time which could be spent more profitably on studies of content matter and methodology. This charge will be dealt with more fully at a later point

Now the study of both ancient and modern languages can be successfully defended: but to defend it we must first take stock of our position and then present our case to the general public, which in this country is the final arbiter in educational matters. In this journal, however, it is not necessary to argue the purely humanistic aspects of the question. The cultural values which spring from the ability to read the world's great literary masterpieces in the original tongues may here be taken for granted. However, the study of foreign languages is also an indispensable aid to research in practically every subject in our college curricula -a fact which our educator friends try to belittle or deny. The remainder of this study will be devoted to demonstrating the value of linguistic knowledge in the single subject of history.

It is of course possible to amass a formidable amount of factual knowledge in history as in other subjects from works published in English, without recourse to any other language. But the research scholar whose labors give validity to those handy guides does not get off so easily. He must know the whole field before he

AVIGNON CONFERENCE

President Van L. Johnson has appointed Dr. Goodwin B. Beach, of Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut, to represent the American Classical League at the Congrès pour le Latin Vivant, which will be held at Avignon in the summer of 1956. The purpose of the Conference is to explore the possibility of setting up Latin as an international auxiliary language for the world today. Dr. Beach will deliver one of the four major addresses of the conference-"presumably," writes Professor Johnson, "in the impeccable Latin for which he is renowned." "M. Capelle, director of the Conference," Professor Johnson adds, "has expressed special satisfaction over Dr. Beach's appointment; and all Latinists in this country will rejoice that America is to be so capably represented at this important international meeting. It is noteworthy that at least one modern government displays an official interest in Latin." President Johnson has been named to the Comité d'Honneur du Congrès, the Chairman of which is the French Minister of Education.

can labor intelligently in his chosen segment of it; and there are few subjects in which this does not call for a reading knowledge of several languages. Without his painstaking explorations progress in all lines of intellectual endeavor would cease, and our educational system would become as stagnant as that of China a century ago. The research historian must have adequate linguistic preparation, which will vary with the segment of the subject on which he chooses to concentrate his efforts.

The research historian makes extensive use of two types of material: original sources, from which the raw material of history is gathered, and secondary works, which keep him in touch with the work of others. Both require a reading knowledge of several languages, as we shall presently see, and in neither case can the researcher depend upon the work of the professional translator to any great extent.

Let us first look at the matter from the viewpoint of source studies. The American scholar, one might be tempted to believe, would be entirely competent to deal with source documents in the history of his own country or of Great Britain with no better equipment than his mother tongue. Such, however, is not the case. The documents from which our knowledge of medieval England is drawn are written in Latin, Norman-French, or Anglo-Saxon; and the first two continued to be used for certain purposes as late as the seventeenth century. Also, the British government carried on diplomatic intercourse with its European neighbors, and the records of these relations are to be found in the French, Dutch, Spanish, Italian, Danish, Swedish, German, Russian, and Turkish languages. The study of American diplomatic history introduces the historian to an equally wide variety of languages, but this is not all. Many of the early colonists were of German origin, and the governments of Florida, Louisiana, Texas, New Mexico, and California at one time used Spanish as their official language. The study of the northern frontier and the Mississippi Valley in the eighteenth century introduces one to documents written in French. Foreign travellers in North America recorded their impressions in any one of several mother tongues. And all of this from the two fields of historical research where the need for linguistic proficiency appears to be least! If, on the other hand, one wishes to do independent research in Roman history, he must master at least Greek and Latin, while at certain points he may be driven to delve into Coptic, Aramaic, or Armenian. It is hardly necessary to elaborate the point that research in the history of the ancient Orient demands a knowledge of such languages as Egyptian, Sumerian, Semitic-Babylonian, or Hittite, or that to study the history of any modern nation one must know at least its official language, if not several

Again, one's studies in the original sources frequently lead him into unfrequented bypaths where much valuable material is to be found, written in a language other than English, and so lacking in general interest that the linguist without historical motive

could expect neither recognition nor profit from the task of translating it. Archives of governments and religious bodies, business accounts, personal papers, and many other types of documents hold precious raw material for the research historian, mingled with dross which only the combination of historical and linguistic training will enable him to separate and discard. The mere volume of such material, in addition to its frequent use of technical terms and its unintegrated character, precludes the possibility of its ever being translated and published in a body.

It is of course true that narrative sources of great literary ment and charm — Herodotus, Thucydides, Livy, Tacitus, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, and Froissart are examples -have been translated, and in many cases well translated. But no translation ever gives to the reader quite all that is found in the original text, and the research historian cannot overlook the possibility that what is lacking will be of critical importance to his study. If the translation is as much as a century old, two other difficulties arise. As any reader of learned language journals is aware, our knowledge of the ancient languages is constantly growing, so that we are better equipped than were the older translators to render the exact sense of the original text. On the other hand, our own language has been evolving, and many words have become obsolete or have undergone radical changes of meaning. Hence the research historian, while he may use translations as conveniences in "spotting" material and securing tentative readings, will take the precaution of checking the translation against the original text before making use of it. Moreover, there is still a considerable body of narrative source material which, because it lacks dramatic interest or stylistic quality, has never been translated. Here the historian must be his own translator. In short, to use original sources efficiently and accurately, the research historian must be able to consult them in the original tongues.

Secondary literature makes equally heavy drafts upon the researcher's linguistic knowledge. Acquaintance with the work already done in a given field of historical research is absolutely prerequisite to further progress in it. The investigator must be sure that he is not duplicating the work of others. He must know their conclusions, the sources upon which these conclusions were based, and the methods of interpretation employed.

To plunge into a subject without this knowledge is to invite failure, and the invitation is seldom declined.

The quantity of secondary literature to be traversed, and its linguistic diversification, are alike unbelievably great. Although our world has thus far failed to achieve political

ECHO OF SAPPHO

(Smyth XXIV)
BY LUCY F. SHERMAN
Saint Mary's School, Peekskill, New York

Dead thou remainest now, nor ever shall there be

A lasting love or memory of thee, For thou hast had no share in Pierian roses rare; But flitting with the dim shades thou

But flitting with the dim shades thou shalt roam,

Hidden, in Hades' home.

unity, the degree of cultural unity which it has attained is ery great, and this fact is nowhere prore apparent than in historical studies. Methods of research in every subject are rapidly becoming standardized in educational institutions everywhere, while no international language has made its appearance as vet to furnish a universal vehicle for the expression of ideas. Hence the number of learned journals and publishing houses has grown prodigiously, and the number of languages in which books and periodical articles are being published has increased accordingly. By far the greater part of this secondary historical literature (in some areas as much as nine-tenths) has never been translated into English and never will be. The research historian must acquaint himself with those sections of it which bear upon his special interest as best he may, and unless he has unlimited financial support at his disposal, in most cases he can do so only by learning to read the languages in which his co-workers in other parts of the world have pub-

lished their more significant results. Here, again, one finds that the American historian writing upon the history of his own country or upon that of Great Britain cannot be content to know only his mother tongue. Just as English and American scholars have written extensively on the history of continental European and Latin American countries, so the Europeans and Latin Americans have retaliated with an extensive list of studies on English and American

themes. Thus the April, 1954, number of the American Historical Review lists, under the heading "English History," four periodical articles in French, two in Dutch, and one each in Norwegian, German, and Italian; and on American subjects it lists six in French and one in German. Almost all of these were published in the single year 1953. But even these lists are dwarfed by that on "Ancient History," with its seven articles in German, twenty-six in French, and fifteen in Italian.

In short, now more than ever before, the historian must be equipped with a wide and exact knowledge of modern and ancient languages if he is to keep himself abreast of the current progress in his field. He cannot rely upon the seductive device of having others do his reading for him; and if he could, only a translator with a profound historical training would serve the purpose. Between the historically-trained linguist and the linguistically-trained historian the difference becomes as unreal as that contained in the freshman's famous saving: "The Homeric poems were not written by Homer at all, but by another man of the same name"!

But there is another and very important reason why the research historian must also be a proficient student of the languages. A people's lan-guage is the mirror of its collective soul and an index to its intellectual processes both past and present. The historian must strive to comprehend both. It was no accident which made the old-time Yankee say "calculate" for "think," or the Hoosier use "aim" for "intend." When a German says that he is suffering from lumbago he calls his ailment Hexenschuss ("witchshot"), while a wild revel is to him a Hexensabbat ("wirches' sabbath"). Neither term reflects his views on the subject of witchcraft, but both recall the terrible and all-pervading superstition under which his ancestors cowered for centuries. One can better understand the agricultural so-ciety of early Rome when one analyzes such words as puto, which originally meant "trim" or "prune," but by derivation "think," or egregius, literally "set apart from the herd," but by derivation "excellent." This process of word analysis becomes doubly important when one studies ancient Semitic or Indo-European word-roots, for by it he can form valid conclusions about various phases of primitive culture on which there is little if any other evidence. In this field the historian must, however, admit his dependence upon the ad-

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EDITOR: LILIAN B. LAWLER, Hunter College, 695 Park Avenue, New York 21, N. Y.

ASSOCIATE EDITORS: W. L. CARR, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Ky.; Konrad Gries, Queens College, Flushing, N. Y.; Eugene S. McCartney, 202 Michigan Union, Ann Arbor, Mich.

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vanced philologist, who helps him to unlock the treasure-house of intellectual history as the ordinary translator, intent only upon conveying the obvious sense of the original smoothly and accurately, cannot be expected to do.

Whatever his field of special interest, the research historian must be a thorough and understanding student of the languages pertinent to it, and the foreign language requirement of our graduate schools is a simple recognition of the fact.

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CHANGES IN CEEB TESTS

This year's Greek Committee of the College Entrance Examination Board has made some significant changes in the forthcoming Greek tests. Two tests are offered, one entirely on Attic Greek, the other on Homeric and Attic Greek, with Homeric questions predominating over Attic questions in the ratio of about 2 to 1. Candidates may choose which of the two tests they feel better qualified to take. For the most part the questions in these tests are similar in form to those in the Latin tests. There will be, however, a few questions rather broader in scope, concerned with aspects of form and content in relation to the Greek passages appearing on the tests.

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WANT A TEACHING POSITION?

The American Classical League maintains a very inexpensive Teacher Placement Service for teachers of Latin or Greek in school or college. For details of the plan see The Classical Outlook for November, (page 15) or address The American

Classical League Service Bureau, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio.

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THE IDES OF MARCH

Julius Caesar was assassinated on March 15, 44 B.C. Why not plan a program for the Caesar class, the Latin Club, or the school assembly to commemorate this important event? For material see page 49.

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TO LESBIA

By Joseph Wohlberg College of the City of New York

In my eyes he seems to be like a god. He

(Dare I say?) appears to be even greater

Sitting there beside you, and all the while

Gazing, he hears you

Softly laughing, laughter which drains my aching

Heart of feeling; for, from the very

I beheld you, Lesbia, every sound has Died on my lips. My

Tongue grows numb, a searing, deep fire courses

Through my limbs, my ears with

their ringing banish Every sound, and both of my eyes are deeply

Covered in darkness.

Idle life, Catullus, for you means danger.

Idle life now sets you adrift in pas-

Idle life has lured even princes, cities On to their ruin.

HOW LINCOLN USED GREEK

BY WALTER R. AGARD University of Wisconsin

IN THE April 23, 1864, issue of Harper's Weekly, the editor, George William Curtis, compared Lincoln's Gettysburg Address with the Funeral Speech of Pericles. It is a fair comparison, as far as the basic ideas are concerned. Students have often asked, after noting the parallels, whether Lincoln had read (in translation, of course) Pericles' speech, as reported in Thucydides' History. There seems no reason to believe that he had (although he had read Edward Everett's address for the same occasion at Gettysburg; in it Everett described in detail the circumstances under which Pericles had spoken). Apparently Pericles and Lincoln merely met somewhat similar situations in somewhat similar ways. But there is evidence that Lincoln, in spite of his almost total lack of formal education, had made the acquaintance of three other Greek authors and was influenced by them.

One was Aesop. Historians agree that Lincoln's reading of the Fables during his late teens made a pro-found impression on him, and not only gave him examples for later use (such as the fable of the bundle of sticks, "in union there is strength," which Lincoln quoted while campaigning for Congress), but also in-structed him in economy and vigor of expression. As Carl Sandburg says, there was in Aesop "a music of simple wisdom and a mystery of common everyday life that touched deep spots in Lincoln." In fact, it has been claimed that except for the Bible the Fables had greater influence than any other book on the development of Lincoln's literary style.

Another author was Plutarch. (A study might well be made of the influence of this writer on famous Americans. Franklin, in his Autobiography, tells of his excitement when he discovered Plutarch's Lives, "which I still read abundantly and I still think that time spent to great advantage." We also recall that among the books chosen by Theodore Roosevelt for reading during his African hunting trip was Plutarch; and in The Boyhood Years, Harry S. Truman has recently testified, "I pored over Plutarch's Lives time and time again.") The reason for Lincoln's reading Plutarch is an amusing instance of what happens in the game of politics. When he was a candidate for the Presidency, a newspaper biographer, wishing to dispel the notion that Lincoln had no cultural background, wrote of his devotion to Plutarch's Lives; but since the journalist had made this up out of whole cloth, he wrote Lincoln begging him to read Plutarch then if he never had before! That Lincoln later did read the Lives is indicated by the fact that from April 7 to July 29, 1862, a copy in the Library of Congress was charged to him at the White House. How much he read, and what effect it had on him, must be left to conjecture.

The third influence was a discipline exerted by the study of Euclid. But before we consider that, mention should be made of Lincoln's carrying on some of his early campaign trips a copy of Rev. William Nielson's Exercises in the Syntax of the Greek Language, and of his possibly having read Homer (see Three Presidents and Their Books, by A. Bestor, C. Mearns, and J. Daniels, Urbana, 1955, pp. 74-75). But this was apparently at best a casual contact. There is, however, no question that his study of Euclid. during his circuit-riding years after his term in Congress, had a very important effect on his thinking and expression. In his own autobiographical sketch he wrote of having "studied and nearly mastered the six books of Euclid." In a letter written in 1859 he declared that Jefferson's "definitions and axioms of free society' were as valid as the definitions and axioms of Euclid. And the much-discussed word "proposition" in the Gettysburg Address was carefully chosen, with its Euclidean meaning in mind; when we realize that, we appreciate better the importance which Lincoln attached to it.

So, in the education which Lincoln (in his own phrase) "picked up," there were these significant elements of Greek thought and expression which he wove into the pattern of his life.

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KNOW OF AN OPENING?

The success of the American Classical League's teacher placement service depends upon the extent to which prospective employers are informed about this service. Heads of classical departments and directors of placement bureaus are earnestly requested to refer to the Director of the Service Bureau any prospective employer whose requests for teachers of Latin or Greek they themselves are not able to fill. Teachers in the schools or colleges are also requested

to report any vacancies of which they may become aware. For full information about this placement service see The Classical Outlook for November, 1955 (page 15).

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ORIGINAL LATIN INSCRIPTIONS IN AMERICA

By Leo M. Kaiser Loyola University, Chicago, Illinois

THE IMPACT of classical studies on American life can be demonstrated in a number of ways. There is one mode of demonstration, however, which has been pretty much passed over, probably because it is of a minor sort: the use of Latin by Americans in their inscriptions.

I have collected roughly some two hundred original inscriptions so far, ninety-five per cent of which are sepulchral, the rest dedicatory. My comments here will concern them-

selves with epitaphs only.

These epitaphs are or were to be found mainly in the Eastern United States, Massachusetts (mainly Cambridge and Boston) being best represented, with seventy-eight. With very few exceptions, the epitaphs are in prose. For the most part they commemorate clergymen, many of whom held educational posts as college presidents, professors, and tutors. A decidedly smaller percentage commemorates students, soldiers, public officials, physicians, and merchants. Some of the important personages honored by Latin inscriptions on their tombstones are: President of the United States John Adams; Eleazar Wheelock, founder of Dart-mouth College; William Bradford, second Governor of Plymouth Colony; six presidents of Harvard and five of Princeton; James Blair. foundet of William and Mary College; Simon Bradstreet. Governor of Massachusetts; Sir John Randolph of Virginia; General Louis Montcalm; Ezekiel Cheever, famed Boston schoolmaster; Benjamin Thomson, early New England poet: Joseph Mc-Keen, first President of Bowdoin Col-

The earliest Latin epitaph I know of is that over the grave of Richard Mather, grandfather of Cotton Mather. Richard Mather died at Dorchester, Massachusetts, in 1669, and was interred in the Old Burying Ground there. Presumably the epitaph was shortly thereafter composed. The "golden period" of Latin epitaphs, however, is 1700-1850. Before and after, findings are meager.

The Latinity of the epitaphs is generally correct, clear, and classical. As far as style goes, simple sentences and qualifying clauses are likely to be heavily laden with endless appositive words and phrases. Occasionally a tremendous periodic sentence is struck off. In the longer epitaphs, which may run from 150 to 200 words, the wealth of biographical detail and the eulogistic cataloguing of virtues can make fairly dull reading. While the remarkable quality of all Latin epitaphs is their dignity-they are never humorous-it does not preclude vivid and vigorous expression. I prefer to demonstrate that by quoting from the epitaph of John Smith, professor of the Greek, Latin, and Hebrew languages:

"Inter litteras incoluit; laboribus invictus, non solum Musarum bibit ad rivulos, sed etiam ad pontes et

intra penetralia potavit."

Flashes of deep emotion are discernible elsewhere in expressions like: "Ah spem dolosam, morbo crudeli correptus!"; "Fuit. ah, fuit!": "O infandum sui desiderium!"; "Eheu, quantum ingenii, quantum integritatis, quantum benevolentiae e terris convolaviit!"

Pathos, as in the ancient epitaphs, is markedly present in epitaphs for those dying young or by drowning. On the gravestone of a young Harvard man we read: "Et numquam te, frater carissime, aspiciamus postbac? At certe semper amabimus." The sound alone is memorable.

There is of course much that is stereotyped or formulaic, expressions like "hic jacet." "memento mori." "animam efflavit in sinu Jesu," and so on. Rather infreouently does one find classical or Biblical quotations incorporated. One epitaph closes with a Latin quatrain from that modern master stylist, Alexander Buchanan.

The question will be asked: Who composed the epitabhs? Most of the time it is impossible to know. Epitaphs were not signed. But there seems some ground for believing that the officiating clergyman may well have turned his hand to writing a suitable Latin inscription for the deceased.

Another question may be asked: Are the epitaphs of much literary consequence? From what I have seen of them, I am forced to answer that too many are not. Their antiquarian

value will of course not be denied.

I am inclined to believe that thousands of original Latin epitaphs can be found in the Western Hemisphere. Printed collections of cemetery inscriptions—fairly rare books—

will yield a number. But happily, and I use the word advisedly, quiet walks in gravevards here and there are the most fruitful.

In the quest for inscriptions one must turn to the past, more remote than we would like. But that there was a past, wholesomely imbued with classical studies, this small area of interest in a modest way corroborates.

BOOK NOTES

The Shadow of the Tower, By Florence Bennett Anderson. Boston: The Christopher Publishing House, 1955. Pp. 498. \$4.50.

The chief interest which this book possesses for teachers of the classics lies in the fact that it was written by a "classicist turned author." Mrs. Anderson, formerly a professor in the Department of Classics of one of our eastern colleges, has now published several historical novels and biographies.

The book in hand is laid in England, France, and the Netherlands during the reign of Elizabeth I. The central figure is the Earl of Northumberland, with whose death in 1632 the volume is concluded. The story is depicted on a large scale, with much action and adventure. At times the archaic diction employed by the author is difficult to follow; but the sweep of the story is compelling.

-L.B.L.

The Sixth Aeneid. A filmstrip of 22 frames, with accompanying mimeographed Commentary. Wm. Blandford. \$1.00, from the author at Trinity School, Croydon, England.

Mr. Blandford has put together, for the use of secondary-school teachers, a short filmstrip to serve as back-ground for the study of the sixth book of the Aeneid. Included in the 22 illustrations are a map, a photograph of the Bay of Naples, a mosaic, a terracotta from Pompeii, the Orpheus-Eurydice and other reliefs, several vase paintings, a few statues (among them the Prima Porta Augustus), and a miniature from a man-

The filmstrip would be of greatest value to students not blessed with the richly-illustrated textbooks which most American students eniov today. Also, many classicists question the value of vase paintings as teaching aids for modern American teen-agers. But the films would probably be very useful in British schools. -I BI

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The address of the Service Bureau is Miami University. Oxford, Ohio.

W. L. CARR, Director

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FEBRUARY Minneographs

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For a complete list of Service Bureau material on the teaching of Caesar's Gallic War see THE CLASSI-CAL OUTLOOK for January, 1955, or send for a free classified Est "Cae-SAF.

The Service Bureau has for sale the following previously announced material.

SUGGESTIONS FOR LATIN WEEK

Thirty-six suggestions with a list of items suitable for exhibits. Prepared by Jonah W. D. Skiles. Order as Mimeograph 687. 15e

LATIN WEEK BADGE

The Service Bureau is making available for general use a Latin Week Badge designed by Miss Isabelle Schwertmann of the Kirkwood (Mo.) High School. The badge is made of sturdy gold-colored cardboard, circular in form and 4 inches in diameter. It carries a picture of the Pantheon in Rome and the words "Latin Week" printed in purple. The badge is perforated at the top for attachment by pin or ribbon. Price, 3e each in quantities of 10 or more.

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151. Two short Latin plays based upon Ovid. 15¢

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263. A Roman birthday. Many characters. A Latin pageant, showing the ceremonies attendant upon a boy's coming of age. 15¢ 294. Officium stellae. Many charac-

294. Officium stellae. Many characters. A liturgical play suitable for presentation at Christmas time. 106

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spiracy. 10¢ 343. Julia. Many characters. A little Roman girl is captured by pirates and later ransomed. 20¢

361. Ludus Romanus. 14 boys. A scene in a Roman school. 20¢

382. Saturnalia. 5 boys—several extra characters. The election of a "King of the Saturnalia" in a Roman household. 15¢

475. The banquet. 6 boys. Caesar's Helvetian war is discussed at the dinner table and one guest is called away for active service. 106

497. History in reverse or Historia mutata. An amusing playlet showing the difficulties of a Roman boy studying the English language. 15¢

502. The bore. 5 boys—several extra characters. The poet Horace tries to escape from a persistent and talkative pest. 156

512. Horatius adulescens. 4 boys and several extra characters. Horace is "hazed" when he arrives in the university town of Athens. 106

513. Convivium. 10 boys. Horace and his friends have a merry time at a dinner party. 10¢

618. Frater bestiarum or Viae ad sapientiam. 16 boys, 1 girl. A Christmas play with music. 406

624. lo Saturnalia. A playlet for beginning Latin students. 10¢

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63. Roman dress. 25¢

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222. The presentation of simple Latin plays in high school. 15¢ 407. Dimensions for Greek costumes.

434 Directions for making the costume of a Roman legionary sol-

dier. 5¢
Article

"On Giving Latin Plays." THE CLASSICAL OUTLOOK for April, 1942.

A GUIDANCE PAMPHLET

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